



Rhode Island Department of Health

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All Rhode Islanders Urged to Take COVID-19 Prevention Measures

As the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) continues to prepare for and respond to the international outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), Rhode Islanders are being strongly urged to take a number of measures to prevent the spread of viruses. These personal prevention measures are critical complements to the efforts being taken at the state level to limit the spread of COVID-19 in Rhode Island.

“We know we will have community transmission of COVID-19 in Rhode Island at some point. It is critical that people stay home if they are sick or have been directed to stay home, and it is critical that we all do things like wash our hands regularly and avoid close personal contact, like handshakes, in public,” said Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH. “This is a situation that is evolving rapidly at the international and national levels. We have been preparing for weeks at the Rhode Island Department of Health, but we need the partnership of all Rhode Islanders to help keep our state healthy and safe.”

Key Guidance and New Efforts

- If you have traveled anywhere internationally (or anywhere overnight in the U.S.) in the last 14 days, monitor yourself for symptoms of COVID-19. These symptoms include fever, cough, or shortness of breath.
- For people who have traveled to China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, or Japan, in addition to monitoring yourself for symptoms, self-quarantine for 14 days. That means do not go to work or school and stay at home. On March 5th Governor Gina M. Raimondo issued a directive for State employees to not come to work if they traveled to China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, or Japan in the last 14 days.
- The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training has set up a COVID-19 Assistance Line and email address (401-462-2020; dlt.covid19@dlt.ri.gov). They are intended to provide support to people regarding COVID-19 and employment issues. The phone line is staffed Monday to Friday during business hours.

- Whenever possible, avoid close personal contact with people in public. When greeting people avoid handshakes and hugs. This message is important for faith communities, among other groups, that will be gathering this weekend and going forward. [Additional guidance](#) is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Early data suggest that older adults are twice as likely to experience serious COVID-19 illness. RIDOH is reiterating CDC's guidance for people older than 60 years of age:
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - Be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies (tissues, etc.) to treat fever and other symptoms. Most people will be able to recover from COVID-19 at home.
 - Pay attention for potential COVID-19 symptoms including, fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you feel like you are developing symptoms, call your doctor.
 - More information is [available from CDC](#).
- On Friday RIDOH officials held a call with the leadership of nursing homes throughout Rhode Island to discuss enhanced measures to protect residents. Facilities have been instructed to:
 - Restrict visitor hours.
 - Not allow people to visit if they are younger than 18 years of age or are feeling sick or experiencing any of the following symptoms: cough, fever, chills, runny nose, stuffy nose, sore throat, or shortness of breath.
 - Actively screen staff, visitors, vendors, and all other people who enter facilities for illness and COVID-19 risks (i.e., travel history, or exposure to someone under investigation for COVID-19). People who have traveled internationally in the last 14 days will be asked to not enter facilities.
 - Only allow residents to leave for medical appointments (as opposed to nonessential appointments, such as an appointment with a hairdresser or a visit to a family member). This policy is to keep residents safe by preventing a person from getting ill and bringing an illness back into the facility. In special circumstances, exceptions can be made from this policy, given the importance of mental and emotional health to the overall wellness of older adults. Families should work with nursing home administrators regarding special circumstances.
- On Friday Governor Raimondo sent a letter to school leadership and higher education leadership reiterating her strong recommendation to cancel upcoming organized international trips.

Data updates

- Number of Rhode Island COVID-19 positive (including presumptive positive) cases: 3
- Number of people who had negative test results at RIDOH's State Health Laboratories: 30
- Number of people for whom tests are pending: 12
- Number of people who are currently instructed to self-quarantine in Rhode Island because they had direct contact with a person with COVID-19: approximately 250

Testing in Rhode Island is being done at RIDOH's State Health Laboratories. Confirmatory testing is being done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Positive results are considered 'presumptive' if they still need to be confirmed by the CDC.

General messages for the public

- **Although Rhode Island has the testing capacity it needs, people without symptoms should not be tested for COVID-19. Testing individuals with no symptoms is not recommended by CDC.**
- If you were with someone who does not have symptoms, the risk of transmission is very low.
- There are many respiratory illnesses circulating in Rhode Island, such as the flu and the common cold. Having respiratory symptoms does not mean that you have COVID-19.
- People are at higher risk for COVID-19 if they have symptoms of the virus (cough, fever, shortness of breath) AND if they were a contact of a positive case of COVID-19 (or have traveled to country with community transmission, such as China, Italy, South Korea, Iran, and Japan).
- Someone is considered a contact if they have had direct, face-to-face contact with a person with COVID-19.
- People who think they have COVID-19 should call their healthcare provider. These people should not go directly to a healthcare facility without first calling a healthcare provider (unless they are experiencing a medical emergency).
- People with general questions about COVID-19 can visit www.health.ri.gov/covid or call **401-222-8022**. **This is the COVID-19 Hotline** that RIDOH has available to the public. (After hours people are being directed to call 211.)
- Everyone can help stop the spread of viruses in Rhode Island.
 - Get your flu shot, and make sure the people around you do the same.
 - Wash your hands often throughout the day. Use warm water and soap. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand gel.

- Cough or sneeze into your elbow. Viruses can spread by coughing or sneezing on other people or into your hands.
- Stay home from work or school if you are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious foods.
- Keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, and toys for children) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant.